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# Oppressed Become the Oppressor: Psychoanalytical Intersections of Trauma in Toni Morrison's the Bluest Eye

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**Funding:** No specific funding was received for this work.

**Potential competing interests:** No potential competing interests to declare.

## Abstract

This paper explores the intricate interplay of racism, trauma, and identity in Toni Morrison's novel *The Bluest Eye*. It delves into the challenges faced by African Americans within a predominantly white society by utilizing current trauma theory and Black feminist concepts. The theoretical framework includes cultural trauma theories, including the contributions from scholar Evelyn J. Schreiber, and insights from feminist thinkers like Bell Hooks and Patricia Hill Collins. Moreover, through an intersectional analysis, the study scrutinizes how gender, racial, class, and generational trauma intertwine to mold individuals' experiences and self-perception. Therefore, by amalgamating trauma theories with feminist perspectives, the research provides valuable insights into the struggles of the characters and the societal dynamics portrayed in Morrison's novel, *The Bluest Eye*.

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**Keywords:** Trauma, Race, Class, Gender, Feminist perspective.

## Introduction

Toni Morrison, an esteemed African American female author celebrated for her depiction of the Black experience in American society, was born in 1931 and raised in Lorain, Ohio. She obtained a master's degree in American Literature from Cornell University. Morrison was awarded the Pulitzer Prize in 1988 for her novel *Beloved*, which uplifts her to be the

first African American woman to win the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1993. The characters in Morrison's novels often grapple with the challenge of defining their identities and attaining racial freedom. However, this struggle is most significantly depicted through their reliance on emotional and physical connections to overcome the anguish that stems from their race. Prominently, the rediscovery of belonging through recollections of past experiences serves as a defense against the cultural distress resulting from slavery, as depicted in *The Bluest Eye*, which is Morrison's first published novel. In this novel, the narrative portrays individuals facing personal and contextual obstacles, where the concept of belonging offers psychological support for their unique experiences within their communities. Most significantly Morrison's psychoanalytic, cultural, and sociological perspectives provide insights into the complex process of recovering from trauma and establishing one's sense of self. Moreover, here, physical injuries serve as repositories for memories and act as mechanisms through which trauma is transmitted from one generation to the next (Caruth 63; Schreiber 11). Trauma is a term commonly employed by many individuals to describe the adverse and distressing incidents they encounter in their everyday lives that significantly affect them. Nevertheless, the notion of trauma is more intricate than that. It cannot be defined by the straightforward approach, which involves drawing parallels between common, everyday stressors. Consequently, this research paper emphasizes and is based on this concept.

Herein below, this research paper aims to analyze how Toni Morrison explores Black feminist thinking and cultural trauma in her novel *The Bluest Eye*. The objective is to investigate the intersection of trauma and Black female identity concerning race, gender, and class. To achieve this goal, the study will delve into trauma theory and the significance of cultural trauma. The statement emphasizes the importance of having a compassionate listener during the expression and processing of traumatic experiences for the purpose of rehabilitation and healing. Furthermore, Morrison's work underscores the role of the community in facilitating healing through the act of remembering. Additionally, the analysis integrates theories by Bell Hooks and Patricia Hill Collins to provide a deeper examination of Morrison's novel.

Toni Morrison's first novel, *The Bluest Eye* (1970), delves into the unique desire of one of her characters to possess blue eyes. This prompts Morrison to investigate the profound impact of racist ideology on the black population. Therefore, through this novel, she aims to expose the dangerous consequences of internalizing such harmful ideas. Intertwined with the history of the Black community, *The Bluest Eye* is celebrated for its powerful language and unwavering exploration of challenging topics that shed light on the struggles endured by African Americans in a society overshadowed by white supremacy. Notably, in this narrative, Morrison unfolds poignant and distressing incidents that inflict both physical and psychological wounds on the characters, leading to a fractured sense of self. With this analysis, the research paper thoroughly examines the harrowing experiences these individuals undergo, along with their shattered perception of self-identity in Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye*. Moreover, it seeks to uncover the underlying significance of Morrison's work while offering insights into her personal beliefs and principles.

Additionally, this novel, *The Bluest Eye* explores the effects of the trauma that African Americans experienced throughout the 20th century, which primarily resulted from socially constructed ideas of white superiority and black inferiority. Emphasizing here, it is important to point out that Black children bear a disproportionate burden of these traumas, which significantly affect their self-perception and lead to fragmentation. According to Barbara Christian, a critic, highlights the gravity of this issue by emphasizing that

*"In the Bluest Eye, the central focus lies on how the dominant standards of physical beauty and romantic love in Western society not only impact black women...but also shape the black community's perception of its inherent worth... By embracing Western beauty ideals, the black community inadvertently surrenders its control over its own cultural norms" (qtd in Bloom, 34)*

The story of *The Bluest Eye* revolves around an eleven-year-old black girl named Pecola Breedlove, who grows up in a hostile society in Lorain, Ohio, in the 1940s. Pecola is depicted as the protagonist of the novel, a young girl who believes she is ugly because of the constant bullying she endures from nearly everyone in her life, including her classmates, parents, and members of her community. In particular, Pecola's longing for blue eyes, which she associates with beauty and social acceptance, originates from the racial abuse and alienation she faces. Therefore, this unattainable yearning for blue eyes leads her towards psychological instability, which ultimately results in tragic events such as two traumatic rapes.

According to a literary critic and professor of African American Studies, Claudia Tate, states that psychoanalysis offers valuable insights into the intricate social dynamics related to race in the United States. She contends that language and communication within a community have an impact on people's socially constructed sense of self (Schreiber 7). Moreover, psychoanalytic theory examines the impact of personal trauma on one's self-esteem (Schreiber 8). So in order to treat trauma, Tate recommends that trauma can stem from a lack of security in one's environment and stresses the fact that it requires establishing a sense of safety for individuals who undergo therapy.

Traumatic experiences often lead to feelings of powerlessness and intense fear. Such encounters can evoke a sense of abandonment, which is a recurring theme in Toni Morrison's literary works. Additionally, Morrison explores the intersection of the individual, family, and culture and portrays trauma not only as a result of specific events but also as influenced by the available support systems in one's physical surroundings, which are also prominent central themes in her literature. However, belief in one's self-worth and maintaining supportive relationships act as protective factors against the negative effects of trauma, offering empowerment to those who share and process their traumatic experiences within a supportive community. Furthermore, Morrison's writings illustrate how domestic environments, familial ties, and social networks can mitigate the impact of psychological distress on an individual's self-esteem. The consequences of traumatic events and their aftermath vary depending on when these traumas occur in a person's life (Schreiber 9).

Childhood trauma, in particular, has long-lasting effects on individuals as they grow into adults. Potentially, this can lead them to develop various coping mechanisms to manage their feelings of helplessness or despair. However, these coping strategies, while initially adaptive in dealing with trauma, can ultimately result in adverse outcomes for both the individual and the community.

## Analysis of Psychoanalytical Inter-Generational Trauma in *The Bluest Eye*

The novel *The Bluest Eye* delves into the consequences of discrimination that unfold after the abolition of slavery on

individuals and their communities. Notably, it is worth noting that in the narrative, young individuals gain an understanding of American culture, their Black communities, and their own self-value through an examination of the historical impact of racial prejudice (Schreiber 65). As they navigate social stereotypes, individuals are challenged to form their own values and beliefs. Specifically, they confront the repercussions of historical occurrences and family trauma, which further complicates their journey of self-discovery. In particular, people in this situation struggle with their identity while seeking security, protection, and affection. They also struggle with a lack of confidence and a sense of helplessness that are products of white culture.

The disassociation from one's sense of self is intricately linked to the racial prejudice manifested by white society towards Black individuals and its profound impact on their personal identity. It's imperative to recognize that Black individuals often find themselves grappling with the expectations imposed by white societal standards, which compel them to seek validation and affirmation within their own community. A poignant illustration of this dynamic can be found in Toni Morrison's novel, *The Bluest Eye*, where Morrison vividly portrays the effects of influence on the Black population through the plight of the Breedlove family. For the Breedloves, their adversities primarily stem from the clash between Western cultural values and their intrinsic way of life. Notably, the Breedloves stand apart from the conventional image of the American family, as they not only struggle to conform to Western cultural norms but also grapple with relinquishing their deeply rooted Black values, including the value of unity within their community.

An exemplar of this exploration is Pecola, a young adolescent who exemplifies the widespread harmful effects of racial discrimination on Black individuals and its capacity to contribute to her mental instability. Consequently, Pecola firmly correlates her sense of value with her skin color and holds the belief that beauty is equivalent to whiteness, which results in her grappling with a detrimental perception of herself. This leads to susceptibility to societal scrutiny. Notably, here, Morrison explores the concept of "unbeing" for Pecola as she struggles to form a sense of self influenced by societal norms of beauty. Morrison states that "she does not perceive herself until she experiences a hallucination of her own identity" (*The Bluest Eye* 211). In effect, it implies that, similar to her mother, she adeptly maneuvers through an artificial world to comply. Hence, here, Morrison explicates her experiences to epitomize the historical subjugation endured by Black individuals and underscores the impact of domestic and communal violence on personal growth.

In addition, the novel explores the consequences of trauma as a collective occurrence resulting from institutional oppression and prejudice. Morrison highlights that dysfunctional families, such as the Breedloves in the novel, arise from environments where parents lack mutual respect and instead neglect and mistreat their children. Consequently, the Breedloves carry a sense of self-hatred, which is evident in their interactions with others. As a result, Pecola becomes a victim of the intergenerational cycle of racial self-hatred. In this aspect of her work, *Black Feminist Thought*, Patricia Collins delves into the relationship between Pecola and her mother, Pauline, which significantly and negatively influences Pecola's sense of empowerment. Therefore, their toxic relationship nurtures harmful views of Pecola's self-worth. Notably, in the novel, Morrison makes it clear that Pauline rejects her own daughter due to her own feelings of inadequacy, passing on fear rather than love or care to her children. This rejection is explicitly shown when Pauline comments on Pecola's appearance at birth: "Although she had a head full of beautiful hair, she was remarkably unattractive (*The Bluest Eye* 124)."

Through analysis, significantly in *Black Feminist Thought*, Collins examines the prevalent portrayal of Black mothers as mammy figures in paid labor, which reinforces their subjugation. This portrayal is a role that Pauline embraces with pride. Bell hooks, in her tome, *Ain't I a Woman*, discusses Black mothers with pride as they adopt the matriarchal role despite its negative connotations. However, Morrison reflects in the novel that Pauline finds gratification in being perceived as a maternal figure. For this, Collins argues that the mammy stereotype is associated with “true womanhood” that aligns with traditional family values, (Collins 79). Thereby, Pauline's choice to embody this image as her sense of purpose is tied to her duties at the Fisher household: “All the meaningfulness of her life was in her work. For her virtues were intact” (*The Bluest Eye* 126). Therefore, Pauline's qualities remain unquestioned in this role. Besides, it is also important to note that, while working for the Fisher family, Pauline shows affection and care for their child, with the Caucasian adolescent affectionately calling her ‘Polly,’ while Pecola addresses her biological mother as Mrs. Breedlove. This contrast highlights how Pecola perceives her mother as lacking the nurturing qualities of a caring parent and sees her as just another adult. Consequently, Pecola becomes an ‘outsider-within,’ ostracized not only by her community due to her skin color but also bears the scars of abuse by her father, which lead to her mental health issues and early pregnancy within her family.

In addition to the above context, Morrison exemplifies another incident in the novel. One day, when Pecola accompanies her mother to the Fisher family's job, she observes a situation in which a young Caucasian girl unintentionally drops a pie in the kitchen and becomes upset. In response, Pauline immediately reacts to Pecola with a sense of humiliation and then starts to physically discipline her before comforting the little white girl, despite Pecola not being at fault. This incident highlights how a mother-child relationship can deeply influence a child's personal growth and self-perception. Throughout the novel, Morrison portrays Pecola from birth, subjecting her to critical evaluation (Ramírez, 80). Additionally, Pauline fails in her duty as a caregiver by doubting Pecola's claims that her father had raped her. This failure is evident as Pauline disregards Pecola's revelation of sexual assault and fails to provide safety, showcasing a stark contrast in her behavior. Therefore, while Pauline acts as a nurturing figure at the white family's residence, embodying the role of a “mammy,” she displays neglectful tendencies in her own household, taking on the role of a “matriarch” (Collins 79, 82). For these representations, Collins argues that these portrayals are socially constructed representations that perpetuate the inferior status of Black women. That is, despite being perceived as dutiful and faithful, similar to a “mammy,” Pauline's portrayal signifies subservience rather than genuine care or affection for her own family. However, in reality, she more closely resembles a diligent houseworker tending to their needs. Consequently, Pauline's personal experiences of trauma and oppression impede her ability to effectively express affection while imparting life lessons, leading to a negative impact on the bond between her and her children. As a result, both Pauline and her children encounter challenges in forming positive female identities due to a lack of empowering maternal support.

Due to the fact that Cholly, the father of Pecola, has suffered from horrific circumstances that have rendered him incapable of displaying paternal attributes, which led him to mistreat and maltreat Pecola. Following Pecola's rape, a sequence of demeaning encounters ensues, which results in her disconnection from her own identity. Moreover, both her mother and father have internalized negative self-perceptions and have continued to support the authoritarian system they were involved in. Furthermore, here, the community bears responsibility for Pecola's psychological distress, as her sense of self

and value are shaped by societal standards, particularly those related to skin tone. It is important to note that within their society, individuals with lighter skin tones are often viewed as superior to those with darker skin tones, which in turn affects the group members' perception of themselves as either superior or inferior. As an example, Claudia reviews:

*"All of us – all who knew her [Pecola] – felt so wholesome after we cleaned ourselves on her. We were so beautiful when we stood astride her ugliness. Her simplicity decorated us, her guilt sanctified us, her pain made us glow with health [...] her poverty kept us generous. [...] and she let us [...]. We honed our egos on her, padded our characters with her frailty, and yawned in the fantasy of our strength. And fantasy it was, for we were not strong" (The Bluest Eye 203).*

Yet another fact is that Pecola Breedlove, who is the protagonist in *The Bluest Eye*, faces bullying and contempt from members of the Black community who perceive her as 'ugly,' which leads them to make her a scapegoat. It is due to her disadvantaged background, she becomes vulnerable to accusations that she is responsible for her own sexual assault. A woman even suggests that Pecola "carry some of the blame" (*The Bluest Eye* 187) and implies that she did not resist the perpetrator, despite her young age of eleven. Moreover, the community's hostility towards Pecola extends to her unborn child, as they anticipate the child inheriting to "be the ugliest thing walking" (187) and express hopes that the child will not survive. However, in contrast, Claudia and Frieda actively work to disrupt the perpetuation of self-loathing from one generation to the next by refusing to conform to societal beauty standards. Unlike the Breedlove family, Claudia's family upholds communal values by supporting Pecola after the assault. Claudia also stands up against those who mistreat Pecola. Thus, Morrison, through their actions, demonstrates how Black individuals can resist and challenge an oppressive society through Claudia and her family.

In Morrison's account of inherited generational trauma, she emphasizes the profound and lasting influence of Western standards of beauty on Pecola. During a visit to Claudia's home, Pecola forms a strong emotional bond with a Shirley Temple cup and even requests candies resembling Mary Jane. To her, consuming the candy signifies more than just enjoying a sweet treat. Besides, for her, it symbolizes a form of escapism and a journey into a realm of fantasy. In addition, she interprets the act of eating the sweets as a way to internalize Mary Jane herself, which makes her convinced that possessing eyes akin to the blue shade of the Shirley Temple doll would make her more appealing to others, garnering their affection. Thence, in her idealized vision, she envisions herself receiving admiration and compliments from both individuals and her parents for her visually striking and enchanting eyes. Nonetheless, Pecola encounters rejection and perceives herself as comparable to unwanted weeds, articulating, "No one harbors affection for the crown of a dandelion" (*The Bluest Eye* 45). Consequently, with this feeling of alienation and being unloved, she bears the brunt of discrimination and bias. Therefore, to seek solace from the torment and absence of affection, Pecola immerses herself in white culture, consuming copious amounts of milk and cultivating a preference for desserts. She believes that to embody the idealized persona of 'Mary Jane,' one must be willing to relinquish parts of their identity to conform to societal expectations and assume a new persona, sacrificing individuality in the process.

From the above instance, it is fascinating to analyze the ways in which African Americans endeavor to embrace white

culture in order to enhance their attractiveness or gain acceptance in society. Specifically, in this scenario, Pecola yearns to assimilate into the dominant culture as a means of achieving beauty. Through Morrison's narrative, we get the understanding that Pecola relies on the judgments of individuals in the societal mainstream to validate herself. Pecola, however, finds it challenging to understand the deeper meaning Mary Jane's image conveys. This illustrates that despite her unawareness of the harmful consequences of coveting blue eyes and conforming to conventional beauty standards, she persists in pursuing the unattainable. Consequently, Morrison suggests through this episode that the impetus behind Pecola's aspirations is her desire for recognition and validation. This makes it clear that even if Pecola were to realize her dream of possessing blue eyes, she would still lack an understanding of the necessary compromises involved in becoming someone other than herself.

In particular, Claudia's encounter with a white Shirley Temple doll over Christmas holds great importance, especially when compared to Pecola's experiences. However, the doll in the novel *The Bluest Eye* represents the idealized white society that Black people are supposed to embrace, but at the same time, Claudia refuses to conform. She disassembles the doll to appreciate its supposed capacity to be loved, despite encountering rejection from adults who fail to grasp her point of view. Thus, Claudia intentionally destroys the doll out of jealousy for the love and attention it receives, as she refuses to accept its symbolic meaning. Eventually, this shows that unlike Pecola, Claudia exhibits a strong sense of pride in her Black identity and actively opposes the societal influences that promote a desire for whiteness, symbolized by the focus on blue eyes.

Notably, as the narrative unfolds, Pecola becomes increasingly absorbed in a realm of imagination. Her mental state deteriorates, which leads her to actively seek out Soaphead Church, whom she views as a 'magician', in hopes of fulfilling her desire for blue eyes that she believes will change her life. At this point in time, Pecola becomes the sole individual to perceive the invisible blue eyes that Soaphead Church supposedly bestows upon her. Pecola, however, retreats into a private world characterized by silence and madness after another upsetting incident that her father started, which firmly convinces her that she now has blue eyes. Despite this conviction, she remains trapped in a state of schizophrenia that offers a distorted sense of autonomy, describing it as "the damage done was total" (*The Bluest Eye* 202). Therefore, by finding solace in embracing madness as a shield against the external world, Pecola sees it as a form of defense against others. Additionally, Pecola eventually turns to schizophrenia as a source of comfort due to the difficulties she faces and uses inner dialogue as a coping mechanism for survival. Therefore, in the story's denouement, it is identified that Pecola discovers comfort through introspection. The damaging effects of internalizing societal norms associated with whiteness manifest in heightened self-hatred and aggression.

Morrison's narrative depicts a community that neglects its children and imposes premature maturity, by subjecting Pecola to hostility in *The Bluest Eye*. It is observed that this ordeal prompts her to develop unique coping strategies distinct from those who have not faced similar threats. Hence, Pecola's tragic story serves as a poignant illustration of the harmful consequences of adopting white cultural ideals. Indeed, in the novel's closing chapters, Morrison accentuates that Claudia acknowledges the shared responsibility of both the community and individuals in Pecola's victimization, stating, "We all burdened her with our refuse, and she internalized it" (*The Bluest Eye* 203). Therefore, unlike Pecola, Claudia highlights a more positive transition into adulthood, unencumbered by the weight of trauma.



According to Bell Hooks in her manual *Ain't I a Woman?*, she presents the statement that within a patriarchal society, men are often encouraged to channel their pent-up animosity against others who have less power, such as women and children (Hooks 105). This phenomenon is not limited to men, as it can also occur in women. The repercussions of this form of wrath are apparent in specific characters. For instance, Morrison mentions in *The Bluest Eye* that Geraldine's strict adherence to white cultural norms results in a lack of maternal affection and emotional attachment towards her son, Junior. As a consequence, Junior channels his hostility towards his mother by displaying anger in other areas. For example, he becomes aware that she prefers their blue-eyed cat over him, leading him to "channel his animosity towards his mother onto the cat" (*The Bluest Eye* 84). Additionally, it should be noted that Junior, who is socially isolated and lacks friends, exhibits aggressive behavior by mistreating both the cat and Pecola. He forcefully throws a sizable black feline at Pecola's face, resulting in harm to her. In a loving, albeit fruitless, attempt, Pecola tries to console the terrified animal before witnessing Junior viciously swing it against a window. In this incident, according to Schreiber's interpretation, Junior's behavior indicates a lack of caring interaction with his mother, thus continuing the pattern of mistreatment that he absorbs from her.

Furthermore, Morrison depicts the Breedlove family as fostering an atmosphere characterized by hate and hostility. In the novel, it is seen that Cholly and Pauline express their animosity through physical violence, and they often engage in arguments and shout at each other. And on top of that, they assign blame to each other, with Pauline feeling. Morrison describes this in her novel as:

*"She needed Cholly's sins desperately. The lower he sank, the wilder and more irresponsible he became, and the more splendid she and her task became. [...] No less did Cholly need her. She was one of the few things abhorrent to him that he could touch and therefore hurt. He poured out on her the sum of all his inarticulate fury and aborted desires. Hating her, he could leave himself intact"* (*The Bluest Eye* 40).

This toxic dynamic between the couple culminates in Cholly setting their home on fire deliberately, which leaves the family in dire straits and in a state of profound hopelessness. Miserably, they find themselves in a situation where they have no alternative but to seek shelter elsewhere. This particular situation of theirs symbolizes their complete loss of ethnic and cultural heritage, familial ties, and personal fulfillment. Moreover, at that moment, homelessness triggers deep-seated fear that is rooted in their past experiences, particularly affecting their daughter Pecola, who is internalized with her parents' individual traumas. Furthermore, Pecola's physical response to the ongoing conflicts between her parents reflects her absorption of their pain, as evident: "Pecola contracts her abdominal muscles and regulates her breathing" (*The Bluest Eye* 38). This signifies that she internalizes the trauma that is present in her environment. For this, Caruth argues that trauma manifests as a physical threat, as seen in Pecola's reactions to external torment by her peers. It is portrayed in the novel that, Pecola "appeared to retreat inward, resembling a folded wing" (*The Bluest Eye* 71). Moreover, Morrison represents, Pecola's brother, Sammy, as also being similarly affected by their parent's trauma. But he reacts in a distinct manner and flees from the violence by running away, which contrasts with Pecola's method of enduring suffering through various means. Here, Morrison emphasizes the fact that both individuals undergo enduring and intense suffering, even



though they employ different methods to deal with it. She writes, “Despite the variations in methods,” (The Bluest Eye 41), she states, “the pain remained consistently profound” (The Bluest Eye 41). Moreover, the protagonist’s internal conflict between a strong urge for one person to eliminate the other, and a deep longing for her own demise is depicted through vivid imagery of her gradual disappearance, symbolizing her desire to vanish slowly. However, firstly, her “fingers vanish individually, followed by her arms disappearing up to the elbows. Her feet at this moment. Only her narrow, narrowed eyes remained. The individuals were consistently abandoned” (The Bluest Eye 43). However, she is acutely aware that her perceived lack of physical attractiveness will perpetually hinder her from attaining true freedom (Schreiber 74).

Another character in the novel is Cholly, who undergoes initial trauma when his mother abandons him in the care of Aunt Jimmy as an infant. Cholly reminisces about the time he spent with his aunt and great role models like Blue Jack during his upbringing in a stable and loving environment, even in adulthood. Nevertheless, these positive recollections soon transform into traumatizing dreams and profoundly influence Cholly’s subsequent existence. An exceptionally personal moment with his beloved, Darlene, is spoiled by embarrassment when they are interrupted by two Caucasian males who mockingly insist that they “get on wid it. An’ make it good, nigger, make it good” (The Bluest Eye 146). As a result of this encounter, Cholly experiences feelings of humiliation and emasculation as he reluctantly obeys the commands of the white males. However, Cholly channels his sentiments of embarrassment and hatred towards Darlene as a reaction to this predicament. Morrison states this in the novel as,

*“Never did he once consider directing his hatred towards the hunters. Such an emotion would have destroyed him”*  
(The Bluest Eye 148).

Therefore, Cholly undergoes humiliation as the two white men diminish his sense of masculinity, which results in him feeling physically and emotionally defenseless.

Over and above, Schreiber describes Cholly as incapable of evading the sensation of being a defenseless youngster within white society. When he sexually assaults Pecola, he unknowingly reenacts his own distressing initial sexual encounter, which results in her internalizing his suffering. Therefore, Pecola literally absorbs his sexual trauma. Cholly’s lack of consistent parental supervision in his own childhood leads him to be an ineffective parent who faces difficulties in forming strong connections with his children. Through examining his thoughts, it can be understood that his intense self-loathing caused him to brutally mistreat Pecola when he mistakenly identified her as Pauline. However, the user experiences a state of perplexity that incites contradictory feelings of affection and animosity, which ultimately leads to the act of attacking his daughter, which mirrors the events involving Darlene and Pauline.

Additionally, Pauline’s belligerent conduct can also be attributed to her encounters with childhood trauma. Having been raised in a sizable family of ten siblings in Alabama, she experienced a distressing incident during her early years when a nail penetrated her foot at the age of two. This incident left her with a sense of alienation within her own family. The physical injuries resulted in a sense of isolation and inadequacy, which in turn caused emotional neglect and a pervasive sense of not fitting in anywhere. Moreover, her desire for connection and acceptance drove her to seek comfort in Cholly,

whom she initially perceived as a source of safety and affection. Nevertheless, as their marital union advanced, sentiments of solitude resurfaced as they relocated from familiar environs, only to encounter repudiation from both Caucasian and African American communities. As a result, Pauline, feeling unsupported and invalidated, was ultimately left isolated once again, which caused her additional distress due to the estrangement.

## Conclusion

Utilizing intersectionality as a strategy has proven to be useful and essential in understanding the intricate systems that impact the experiences of African American women. In order to fully comprehend the lived experience of an African American female in the United States, it is essential to examine several factors, including social context, race, class, and gender, that intersect and shape individuals' self-perception. Moreover, it is crucial to comprehend that each factor has a significant influence, and it is not feasible to isolate and concentrate on them individually. Significantly, Morrison makes it evident through the main characters' terrible experiences, which are the result of numerous variables, including their ethnicity, gender, and social class, in *The Bluest Eye*. Despite being a fiction writer, Toni Morrison acknowledges that her works have elements of fact. Moreover, black feminist thought, within a theoretical framework, encompasses the views, interpretations, and experiences of Black females in America, forming a collection of Black feminist standpoints. Therefore, by utilizing Black feminist thought in the study, it has facilitated the development of a lexicon for examination, by encompassing terms such as mummies, matriarchs, the Other, and Black womanhood. Besides, the importance of each character in the novel serves as a representation of the African American experience in the United States. They symbolize the historical legacy of slavery and the experiences they have endured. Moreover, they symbolize those who have been overlooked and suppressed.

Therefore, the selected theories and the novel *The Bluest Eye* serve as depictions of the personal encounters of both Black females and males, aiming to illustrate the concepts of cultural trauma and Black feminism that align with the realities of Black individuals. Hence, Toni Morrison's works bring to light the tragedies that African Americans face in their lives by exploring the intersections of race, gender, class, and trauma. In essence, her writings have the potential to elevate the status of Black individuals, particularly Black women, from a marginalized position to a more prominent and influential role. Moreover, Morrison not only illustrates the castration of Black individuals by whites, but also explores the African American community's disregard for its own members. In Toni Morrison's novel, *The Bluest Eye*, the central character, Pecola, a young African American girl, experiences violence inflicted upon her by both members of her own Black community and those of white ethnicity. Thus, the issue of violence achieves its own creative manifesto, leading to many conclusions and repercussions. The text depicts a sequence of cause and effect that gives rise to a chain of interconnected events.

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